

Answers Concerning Catholic Doctrine from:

## **THE CATHOLIC ANSWER**

: A monthly magazine. E-mail: [tcanswer@osv.com](mailto:tcanswer@osv.com)  
Brief Quotes to Help You Understand Catholic Teaching.

### **“Born Again”** (pg. 24, Sept/Oct. 2011)

**Q.** ... I have some none Catholic friends who claim to be “born-again Christians.” What do they mean by being “*born again?*”

**A.** ... When Jesus spoke of being “**born anew,**”... that is, **receiving spiritual rebirth through baptism ... the only way ... one can become a Christian ...** Many Protestants have a different interpretation ... we are saved by faith alone ... baptism is only an outward sign of loyalty to Christ, and the Lord’s Supper a reminder of Jesus’ death for us ... Protestantism defines being “born anew” (“born again”) as conversion. One becomes a Christian not through baptism but through consciously giving one’s life to Christ. ... “**born anew**” can occur **only through the Sacrament of Baptism.**

[See Question: **Scripture and Tradition**]

### **Are Muslims and Protestants Saved?** (pg. 28, Sept/Oct. 2011)

**Q.** I’m writing about a few puzzling teachings of other faiths.

[Some] Muslims believe when they kill in the name of Allah they’ll go right to Heaven ... Protestants all seem to teach that all you need to do to be saved is accept Christ into your heart with faith and you’ll be saved regardless what you do after that ...

**A.** Protestants generally believe that one is saved by true conversion to Christ ... if one who has given his life to Christ does not live a Christian life, they assume that person had not truly submitted to Christ.

It’s true that some radical Muslims believe there is heavenly reward for killing infidels who resist conversion to the Muslim faith ... Strictly speaking, those radical Muslims would not be guilty of mortal sin because they believed what they did was right. But they would still be murderers ... If God in His mercy should admit them into purgatory ... they would require unimaginable purgation.

[ see question: **Non-Catholics Saved by the Church?** ]

[ see question: **PURGATORY NO MORE?** “Whatever may be the suffering in this purgation, souls in purgatory must be very joyful, because their ultimate salvation is assured.” ]

## **Explaining Catholicism** (pg. 13, July/Aug. 2011)

**Q.** How do you explain Catholicism to non-Catholic friends, including the crucifix?

**A.** Start with the crucifix ... Gazing upon the crucifix reminds us of the horror of our sins, which helped put Jesus on that cross. That gaze can strengthen our resolve to avoid sin and thereby free Our Lord from further suffering ...

... Here are some essentials ...

Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God who through His life, death, resurrection and ascension has redeemed the entire universe. He created His one true Church to carry on His work of redemption by making His saving love available to the human race. His Church, the Catholic Church, offers the world the fullness of Christ’s truth and His means of grace. Speaking through His Church, Jesus Christ guides our lives in basic matters of belief and practice. **Only by submitting to Jesus Christ through His Church can we be assured of submitting to Him on His terms** and not on our own terms. Every Christian tradition other than the Catholic Church can offer only a partial Gospel.

## **Why No Catholic Bible Studies?** (pg. 25, March/April 2010)

**Q.** Why are we as Catholics not encouraged or instructed to read and study the Bible ...?

**A.** The fault ... bishops and ... clergy ... do not give the leadership ... we should.

Study of the Bible, of course, must always take place within the context of the Church’s teaching ...

**The Bible is the Church's book**: written, preserved, canonized by her. The Church is necessarily its interpreter ... The Church is the interpreter ... **We learn from the Church's doctrine what the Bible means ...**

... **if what we think the Scripture says** to us in any way **conflicts with** what the **Church** teaches, we can know **that particular interpretation** is wrong and **must be rejected**.

**Mother Church?** (pg. 14, July/Aug. 2010)

**Q.** Why is **the Church** called our **Mother**?

**A.** ... **through her and only through her** ... we **receive** ... gifts ... **new birth ... eternal life**.

... St. Cyprian declared in the third century, "No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother." The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches "... the Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to introduce us to the understanding and the life of faith" (No. 171; see also No. 169).

**"Full Communion"?** (pg. 9, Jan/Feb. 2010)

**Q.** In a previous column you referred to a Church document which teaches that **anyone who denies even one of the Church's teachings** is **no longer "in the full communion"** of the Catholic Church." This seems quite drastic. Please explain.

**A.** The document ... Pope John Paul II's *motu proprio* ("on his own initiative") *Ad Tuendam Fidem* ("To Protect the Faith") ... This does seem drastic, until we analyze **the reason** for the teaching.

Suppose a Catholic declares that he accepts everything the Church teaches except ... First, **he** has **implicitly denied ... Churches ability to teach infallibly** ... **If she is wrong in ... one respect, she can lay no claim to speaking infallibly** ...

Second ... dissenter ... at the top of ... slippery downhill slope ... **he will** ... question and ... **deny other teachings**.

## {Other Articles On This Topic}

**Americans don't know much about religion.** Tues. 9-28-09; pg.A3

(AP) **Forty-five percent of Roman Catholics** who participated in the study **didn't know** that, according to church teaching, the bread and wine used in Holy Communion is not just a symbol, but becomes the body and blood of Christ.

**Obsolete sacrament?** 3-27-11; pg. 19; Our Sunday Visitor; [www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com)

Been to confession lately?

... a full **75 percent** of Catholics in the United States say they

**go** to confession **less than once a year or never.**

Just **2 percent** say they avail themselves of the sacrament

**once a month or more** frequently.

**Dear Fellow Catholic:** Apr. 2011; N.O.R.; [www.newoxfordreview.org](http://www.newoxfordreview.org)

**Two out of three Catholics no longer believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.** Weekly Mass attendance has dropped

from 70 percent before Vatican II to 30 percent today ...

**When it comes to abortion, contraception, divorce, and consumerism, Catholic attitudes basically mirror those of everyone else ...**

Our unswerving loyalty to the Pope and the Magisterium has attracted the brightest minds in orthodox Catholic journalism ...

**Karl Keating, president of Catholic Answers.**

**Non-Catholics Saved by the Church?** (pg. 18, Nov/Dec. 2009)

**Q.** Someone told me that **non-Catholics are saved because of the Catholic Church.** Can you explain this?

**A.** The Catholic Church ... **anyone who is saved is saved because of, and through, the Catholic Church** ... “outside the Church, no salvation” (*extra ecclesiam, nulla salus*).

This is no boastful claim ... **simply** ... **how God has chosen to redeem His world.**

First ... Sacred Scripture and Tradition, divinely inspired ... **no one can be saved except through Jesus Christ ... through the suffering, death and resurrection of His body ... - His Mystical Body, - The risen Lord now has another body ... the Catholic Church.** Through that body (the Mystical Body) **He continues the work of His redemption** ... the Catholic Church ... **is** “the universal sacrament of salvation” (*Lumen Gentium*, No. 48) ... **“has**, in God’s plan, an *indispensable relationship with the salvation of every human being*” (No. 20; emphasis added) ...

“Outside the Church, no salvation.” Those who do not know the Church ... receive her gifts **if they are in good faith and loyal to the truth they have received.**

## Scripture and Tradition (pg. 11, Nov/Dec. 2005)

**Q.** A Protestant friend recently commented to me that the belief in saints is not in Scripture. I reminded him that the Church also relies on Tradition ...

**A.** ... the Church relies on Tradition ...

Scripture nowhere teaches--indeed, nowhere even implies--that all Christian belief must be “proved” from Scripture ... {Gary: see Acts 17:11 “these were of a nobler character ... studying the Scriptures every day to see whether these things were so.” NACE Bible}

Members of the Catholic Church wrote the New Testament ... the Catholic Church decided which were to be canonical ... Does a given book authentically reflect the Church’s traditions? On this basis the Church selected the 27 books ... in the New Testament.

... She alone understands it correctly. ... Apart from the Catholic Church’s teaching authority, which is received from Christ, there is no way to gain certain knowledge of scriptural teaching.

### [Gary Westgerdes: A seeming contradiction found in a Catholic Bible.]

Copyright, 1941, By: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine

New American Catholic Edition of The Holy Bible (Except The Text Of The New Testament), Copyright 1950, By Benziger Brothers, Inc.

Imprimatur: *francis Cardinal Spellman, D.D. Archbishop of New York...Jan. 18, 1952.*

**“1 PETER:** ... you were redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ ... For you have been **reborn**, not from corruptible seed but from incorruptible, **through the word of God** Who lives and abides forever ... “... the word of

the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word of the gospel that was preached to you ... **Crave**, as newborn babes, **pure spiritual milk**, that by it you may grow to salvation; if, indeed, you have tasted that the Lord is sweet. Draw near to Him, a living stone ... Scripture says ... “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal,” to those who stumble at the word, and who do not believe. (1 Peter 1:18, 19, 23-25; 2:2, 6, 8).

Footnote: 2:2 **Newborn** babes ... will attain to **maturity** (Eph. 4:13f)  
more readily when strengthened **by the spiritual milk,**  
the pure and unadulterated **word of God.**

[Pages: 656 - 657]”

**Marcus C. Grodi:** Host of the EWTN program “The Journey Home”  
**As Catholics, we believe that our life in Christ involves** not one conversion experience, which then sets some guaranteed direction for our life. Rather, we recognize that Christians need a lifetime of conversions by grace in God’s direction.

We don’t merely turn once from sin and into God’s direction for eternity ... we must do so daily ... hourly ... every minute ... by the aid of grace ...

**especially** the graces we are given for our help in **the sacraments.**

[ **Gary:** SEE ABOVE: for true spiritual milk. “For by grace you have been saved through faith” Eph. 2:8. /// “Faith then depends on hearing ... **the word of Christ**” Romans 10:17. NACE -- bible ]

**Old Roman Catholic Church?** (pg. 20, Mar/Apr. 2009)

**Q.** There is a **small, wonderful church** near me called “the Old Roman Catholic Church.” The people are so nice, the service inspiring ...  
... their bishop ... says I can go there without fear of heresy. ... our bishop’s office ... I am required to attend my diocesan church and support it weekly, then I could attend ... at another time. My parish priest said no ...?

**A.** Take your parish priest’s advice. ... they deny fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church ... **their teachings are heretical**

... **Even if** their ministers **don beautiful traditional liturgical robes,**  
**even if** they are **nice to you,** and **even if** the **service is inspiring,** you should **avoid them,** for **they will gradually lead you astray.** Remember ...  
“where Peter is, there is the Church.”... the Roman pontiff ... is the successor

of St. Peter. The “lady at the bishop’s office” ... was imprudent to suggest ... “attend ... at another time.” **You’re either in the boat, or not, so stay put!**

\*[ Gary Westgerdes: **On a contrary note** see passage in Matthew 14:27-33 and **Step out of the “Boat of your Church and or Religion”** and **reach out your hand to Jesus outstretched hand** and **by faith in Him receive His gift of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life.**

MATTHEW 14:27-33: ... Jesus ... spoke ... saying, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.” Peter ... “Lord, if it is thou, bid me come to thee over the water.” And He said, “Come.” ... **Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water to come to Jesus ...**

**he saw ... he was afraid ... he cried out ... “Lord, save me!”**

... Jesus at once stretched forth His hand and took hold of him, saying ... **“O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?”** {from: The NACE Bible.}\*

## **PURGATORY NO MORE?** (pg.7, Sept/Oct. 2009)

**Q.** ... the Church’s current teaching on purgatory? A friend ... said the Church no longer says there is a purgatory ...

**A.** Your friend is grievously mistaken ... The Church never casts aside any of her definitive teaching ... the doctrine of purgatory was given definitive expression at the ... Councils of Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439).

... The Church simply teaches ... those who die in a state of grace but are not yet perfectly cleansed from all ... sin must undergo a cleansing process “so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1030). Whatever may be the suffering involved in this purgation, souls in purgatory must be very joyful, because their **ultimate salvation is assured.**

## **Right After Death?** (pg. 10, Sept/Oct. 2009)

**Q.** Where are people sent right after death according to Catholic teaching?

**A.** ... The Church ... teaching focuses on the state of souls right after death ...

The Catechism of the Catholic Church ... **“Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death”** (No. 1022). ... “in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ:

either ... heaven--through a purification {purgatory} or immediately--or immediate and everlasting damnation” (No. 1022) ...

In short: ... God. The souls of those who died in friendship with Him either go to heaven or begin the purifying process (purgatory) that ultimately leads to heaven. Those who died without being in friendship with God go to hell.

## **The Fire of Purgatory.** (pg. 8, Sept./Oct. 2012)

**Q.** ... Since childhood I have believed in purgatory ... St. Faustina ... saw fire in purgatory. Could you please explain this.

**A.** ... In sacred Scripture, the metaphor of fire is often used to suggest eternal suffering of the damned ... Mystics ... have also associated the symbol of fire with the experience of purgatory. But the suffering of purgatory is a totally different reality than the suffering of hell.

... the purpose of life in purgatory is ... Complete cleansing of the soul of all attachment to sin, all traces of self-centeredness; complete healing of and freedom from the consequences of sin: this is what purgatory will do for us. **[? Really !]** **Gary: What about JESUS' suffering/death, burial & resurrection?** What did Jesus' shed blood do for us? ] Apart from the souls in heaven, the only souls in creation who have absolute assurance of eventually sharing in the life of heaven are the souls in purgatory. Surely life in purgatory is deeply joyful, whatever the suffering involved.

## **Becoming a Good Catholic?** (pg. 26, May/June 2012)

**Q.** Hello. I have recently begun RCIA ... My question is: If I probably won't be a GOOD Catholic – that is, any better catholic than I've been a Protestant, mainly not being a faithful churchgoer and worker – is there any point in becoming one? (I'm lazy, and I'm 65 with a full-time job, and value sleeping in on weekends, I thought Saturday night Mass might save the day [and me] but what if I slip even on that? ...

**A.** Susan, you'll make a great Catholic! You are so honest and sincere, you remind me of what Jesus said about Nathanael: “Here is a true Israelite, There is no duplicity in him” (Jn. 1:47).

OK, so you're lazy. Who isn't? but you should consider this: With God's grace, **everything can change in an instant!** Which means, you CAN change for the better! **Once you become Catholic, you will have unlimited sanctifying grace available to you** through the **SACRAMENTS**, especially frequent **confession** and frequent reception of the **holy Eucharist**. And **that grace – if you receive it with a humble and open heart – can completely change you.** Who knows, soon you might be saying, "It's a far, far better thing I do now, that I have ever done before!" **You could become a saint ...**

\*[ Gary Westgerdes: **If you receive Jesus with a humble and open heart He will completely change you,** Through the grace **you will receive** through faith in Jesus you will **be** completely changed, **spiritually born again:** your sins will be **forgiven** and you will receive God's **gift of everlasting life** You will be welcomed into **Heaven**. All the Angels will rejoice (Luke 15:7, 10) and **You will immediately become a saint! ]**

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Gary: A Good Question to Ponder.

## How Do You Become A Friend of GOD?

See Pamphlet: **What Would You Say?**

(on web-site Home Page)

**If Tonight God Asked You:**

**Why Should I Let You Into Heaven?**

**Why Should I Give You Eternal Life?**

**Compiled** by: Gary Westgerdes from Catholic sources.

[www.thekeysofheaven.com](http://www.thekeysofheaven.com)